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Harvey Rice

—AND—

The Common School Law OF OHIO.



Historical Sketch,

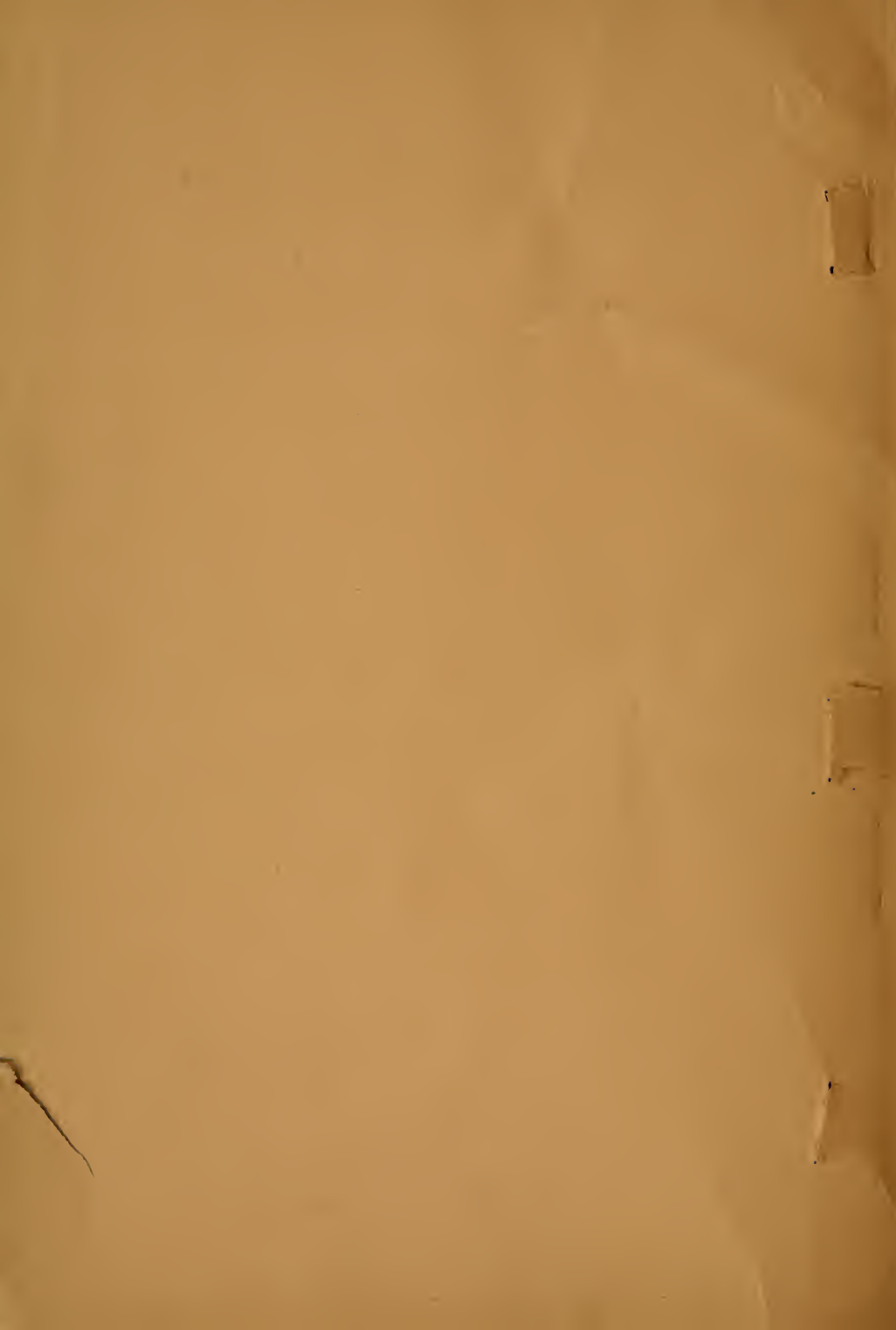
PREPARED FOR THE

RICE MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

BY

FREDERICK T. WALLACE.

CLEVELAND, O :
THE W. M. BAYNE PRINTING HOUSE
1892.



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Written and published by order of the
RICE MEMORIAL COMMITTEE.

A. J. WILLIAMS, President.
E. S. FLINT, Treasurer.
JOHN JASTER, Secretary.

IN EXCHANGE
JAN 5 - 1915

77.16-15

Harvey Rice.

The death of HARVEY RICE, on the 7th day of November. 1891, in the ninety-second year of his age, awakens a memory, historical and personal, of nearly three generations.

His early contemporaries, compatriots and neighbors of the Pioneer generation had mostly long ago departed, leaving him the last and most stately oak of the forest. The present generation had grown up to respect and revere his character and person, while knowing but little of his public services of a half a century earlier, and that little only legendary—the records of the public journals of the State of fifty years ago, having passed into oblivion.

For many of the later years of his long and eventful life, MR. RICE was the president and inspiring spirit of the Early Settlers' Association, of the Western Reserve, and in that capacity annually delivered a discourse pertinent and attractive, largely historical, touching incidents and events of the lives of the oldest and most noted Pioneers,

During all the years of developing pioneer history, MR. RICE, with characteristic modesty, rarely, if ever alluded, even the most remotely, to his own participation in pioneer life, much to the regret of his modern friends and reverential admirers. Finally, as the evening shadows seemed to cluster thicker and thicker around his noble brow, anxious friends from time to time urged upon him—as a legacy to the present generation—to waive all personal delicacy, and tell the world his personal history and experiences. At the last meeting but one of the Association at which he presided, he yielded to the solicitation of the many, and not only gratified but delighted an audience of more than 2,000 people by his personal reminiscences. Though his voice had lost the clarion tones of his early manhood, yet his enunciation was so measured and emphatic that not a word was lost, but the narrative flowed on like the classic river

“Though gentle, yet not dull—
Strong though in flood,
Without o’erflowing, full,”

MR. RICE'S

Autobiographical Address.

In attempting to sketch a few incidents in my own career, I cannot but feel that I "o'erstep the modesty of Nature;" yet justify myself in thinking that what I have to say may have a tendency to encourage young men never to despair of success, who are left as I was, to take care of themselves in the world.

My birth occurred June 11, 1800, at Conway, Mass., an incident for which I am not responsible. It brought with it, however, the responsibilities of my lifework. My father was a New England farmer of Puritanic ancestry. He was not only an industrious but an honest man. My mother was the "angel of the household." She departed this life when I was but four years old. Soon after her death my father discontinued house-keeping, and placed me in the care of strangers, who cared more for the compensation they received than for my welfare. As a matter of fact, instead of being brought up with parental care, I brought myself up, and educated myself at Williams College, where I graduated in 1824, and then "went West."

From Williamstown to Buffalo I travelled by the

most expeditious conveyances then known—the stage-coach and canal-boat. My trip from Buffalo to Cleveland was made by way of Lake Erie in a schooner, which, after a rough voyage of three days, cast anchor off the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, late at night, on the 24th of September, 1824. A sand-bar prevented the schooner from entering the river. The jolly boat was let down, and two jolly fellows, myself and a young man from Baltimore, were transferred to the boat with our baggage, and rowed by a brawny sailor over the sand-bar into the placid waters of the river, and landed on the end of a row of planks that stood on stilts and bridged the marshy brink of the river to the foot of Union Lane. Here we were left standing with our trunks on the wharf-end of a plank at midnight, strangers in a strange land. We hardly knew what to do, but soon concluded that we must make our way in the world, however dark the prospect. There was no time to be lost, so we commenced our career in Ohio as “porters,” by shouldering our trunks and groping our way up Union Lane to Superior Street, where we espied a light at some distance up the street, to which we directed our footsteps.

On reaching the light we found that we had arrived at a tavern kept by Michael Spangler, a noble-hearted German. The modern word “hotel” for tavern had not then come into vogue. Five large Pennsylvania wagons, covered with white canvas, stood in front of the tavern with as many teams of gigantic horses feeding from cribs attached to front and rear of the wagons. It was a novel sight. These huge wagons were known in common parlance as “prairie

schooners," and were employed in transporting produce and merchandise between Cleveland and Pittsburgh. On entering the bar-room, which was lighted by a solitary candle, we stumbled over several teamsters, who lay fast asleep on the floor, laboriously engaged in complimenting the landlord with a nasal serenade. This was the first "musical concert" that I attended in Cleveland.

In the morning, after partaking of an elaborate breakfast, garnished with sauer-kraut, the first I had ever tasted, I took a stroll to see the town, and in less than half an hour saw all there was of it. The town, even at that time, was proud of itself, and called itself the "gem of the West." In fact, the Public Square, so called, was begemmed with stumps, while near its centre glowed its crowning jewel, a log court-house, with the jail and the jailer's residence on the lower floor, and the court-room in the upper story. The eastern border of the Square was skirted by the native forest, which abounded in rabbits and squirrels, and afforded the villagers "a happy hunting-ground."

The entire population did not, at that time, exceed four hundred souls. The dwellings were generally small, but were interpressed here and there with a few pretentious mansions. The chief magnates of the town were the valiant sons of a Puritanic ancestry, and of course inherited a spirit of enterprise. They had erected an academy on St. Clair Street, in the upper story of which they held religious services on Sunday. They also encouraged trade, commerce and manufactures, and had established a shipyard, tannery, soap factory, and distillery, near the foot of Superior

Street. All this gave assurance to the town of a brilliant future.

I did not emigrate from the East with the expectation of luxuriating in this paradise of the West, but for the sterner purpose of fighting the battle of life. I came armed with no other weapons than a letter of introduction to a leading citizen of the town, and a college diploma printed in Latin, which affixed to my name the vainglorious title of "A. B." With these instrumentalities I succeeded, on the second day after my arrival, in securing the position of classical teacher and principal of the "Cleveland Academy."

This proud old structure still stands on St. Clair Street, and is now occupied as headquarters by the fire department of the city. My earthly possessions at this time consisted of a scanty supply of wearing apparel, a few classical text-books, and a three-dollar bank-note. I remained a week at Spangler's tavern before commencing my academical labors. On leaving I stepped up to the bar and asked the amount of my bill. "Two-fifty," replied the landlord. I handed him my three-dollar bank-note. He returned me a half-dollar. I then engaged lodging at a private boarding-house, opened my school, and commenced business based on a solid capital of fifty cents. This I expended on the following day for necessary stationery. The only fear I had was that my boarding-house might ask me for money before the close of the first quarter. But it so happened that nothing was said about it. When the quarter closed, I collected tuitions, paid up all I owed, and nobody had questioned my solvency. In the meantime I entered my name as a student in

the law-office of Reuben Wood, Esq., and employed my leisure hours in study.

In the spring of 1826 I resigned my position in the academy and went to Cincinnati, where I continued my legal study with Bellamy Storer, Esq., and expected to sustain myself by teaching a select classical school. But in this expectation I was disappointed, and soon became penniless. In order to cancel the small balance I owed for board and get away from Cincinnati, I sent the few classical text-books I had to be sold at public auction, and realized less than half their value; but enough to acquit myself of debt and pay for a deck passage up the Ohio River to Gallipolis, on the evening steamboat bound for Pittsburgh. The next morning I was landed with my trunk, at an early hour, on the sand-beach of the river, opposite the town of Gallipolis, "alone in my glory." All the money I had left was twenty-five cents. In a few minutes a porter with a wheelbarrow appeared, and offered to take my trunk to the tavern—the best in town. "What is your charge?" said I. "Twenty-five cents," said he. "All right," said I, "go ahead." I followed, and when we reached the tavern, I paid his charge and was again left penniless. I entered the tavern with a cheerful air, registered my name, and ordered a breakfast. I was evidently taken to be a man of some consequence. The best lodging chamber in the house was assigned me. After breakfast I retired to my chamber to consider what I could do to bridge over the dilemma in which I was placed, and save myself from disgrace.

The truth was I had come into town unheralded; nobody knew me, and I knew nobody. Half lost in

bewilderment, I looked about me, and saw a book with pen, ink and paper laying on the table. I caught up the book for relief. It proved to be "Murray's English Grammar." In an instant the lucky thought struck me that I could give a course of lectures on grammar; and before I had fairly digested my breakfast, I digested a scheme of procedure; sallied out into the town; secured the use of the court-house for a free lecture in the evening; had a notice printed on trust; posted it myself in public places about town, announcing that I was the author of a new and philosophical method of teaching English grammar in accordance with the origin and progress of language, and without the aid of text-books. All this was done before my dinner hour. I had no time to write a lecture, but taught it.

The notice I had posted up created a sensation, and gave me a full house. On entering the court-room I was invited to occupy the "judgment-seat," an elevation that subjected me to the scrutinizing gaze of every eye. I felt the effect. It was my first attempt to address a public audience. When I arose to speak, I turned "quaker," not in creed but literally; yet soon composed myself, and said that everybody who aspires to respectability in writing and in conversation, or who desires to move in the circles of refined society, should have an accurate knowledge of grammar. I then gave the audience an inkling of my new and philosophical method of teaching the science, and by way of illustration said that the first word a child utters is an *interjection*—as oh! ah!—at the sight of a new object; the second, a noun, the name of the

object seen—as apple ; the third an adjective, expressing the quality of the object—as sweet or sour apple. The other parts of speech, I said, can be as readily traced to their origin in the progress of language as those I had specified. I then concluded by saying, give me a class of pupils from twelve to twenty years of age, who have never studied grammar, and I will agree to teach them the science in six weeks by a daily lecture of two hours, at the moderate charge of three dollars apiece ; and in case my pupils or their friends are not satisfied with the result, I will make no charge.

This was so fair a proposition that I readily obtained a class of thirty pupils at the close of my lecture. A vacant schoolroom was assigned me, and in the afternoon of the next day I met my class and commenced instruction. The only book allowed was the English reader. I began by explaining the interjection in a familiar way, and then required the class to open the reader and point out the interjections on a certain number of pages. This they readily did. I then proceeded to explain the noun, which was recognized by the class almost as readily as the interjection. In this way I proceeded with the other parts of speech until they were understood.

I then commenced analyzing sentences and applying the rules of syntax, and at the end of six weeks found, to my surprise, that the class had acquired not only a very good but a somewhat critical knowledge of the English grammar. I invited a public examination of the class. The fathers and mothers of the pupils and the clergymen, lawyers and doctors of the town attended. The examination was

decidedly exhaustive, yet very few mistakes were made. The result was pronounced satisfactory, and my charge for tuition was cheerfully paid. This success relieved me of pecuniary pressure. I have ventured to speak of this incident somewhat in detail, because I believe it to be the true method of teaching English Grammar.

From Gallipolis I returned to Cleveland and was admitted to the bar. I commenced the practice of law in partnership with my friend, Reuben Wood, Esq., who afterwards became chief-justice, and then governor of the State. In the course of a few months I married, and paid the poor clergyman who officiated five dollars, all the money I had. This left me penniless again; but I thought a wife at that price cheap enough. She proved to be a jewel above price. Soon after my marriage I was employed by a gentleman, who had tired of the "silken tie" that bound him, to obtain for him a divorce. If I succeeded, he agreed to pay me a hundred dollars. I did succeed, and in the evening of the same day the divorce was granted he married another woman. The fee I received enabled me to commence housekeeping.

In 1830 I drifted into politics, and was elected a representative to the legislature. Near the close of the session I was appointed agent by that honorable body to sell the Western Reserve school lands, some fifty thousand acres, located in Holmes and Tuscarawas Counties. I opened a land office at Millersburg in Holmes County. The law allowed me three per cent. on cash receipts for my services. In the first five days I received from sales at public auction fifty

thousand dollars, and my percentage amounted to fifteen hundred dollars. This sudden windfall made me, I then thought, almost a millionaire. It was my first pecuniary success in life, and the first time after a lapse of eight years that I became able to pay my college tuition, for which I had given my promissory note.

In 1833 I returned to Cleveland, and was appointed clerk of the county courts, a position which I held for seven years. In the meantime I was twice nominated for Congress, and in the race made a narrow escape from falling into the moral dangers that beset the footsteps of congressmen.

In 1851 I was elected to the State senate, and was made chairman of the committee on schools. Among other things pertaining to legislation I prepared and introduced the bill re-organizing the common school system of the State, which became a law and gave to our public schools a high character of efficiency. I also introduced the Reform Farm Bill, providing for the care, education, and moral training of young criminals. This bill was, for want of time, postponed to a subsequent session. In the meantime my term as senator expired. My political friends induced me to become a candidate for re-election. My opponent was personally one of my best friends. The issue in the campaign was the "temperance question."

My opponent was known as a rigid temperance man, and though I had voted for the most stringent temperance law ever enacted in the State, it got noised abroad that my opponent was the better temperance man, because he would not allow his wife

to put brandy in her mince-pies, while I, it was said, not only allowed my wife to put brandy in her mince-pies, but her pickles, too. This turned the scale against me, and my opponent was elected. He made a good senator, and took up my Reform Farm Bill where I had left it, and was largely instrumental in securing its passage and locating the Reform Farm School at Lancaster, where it has proved to be one of the most successful reformatory schools in the United States.

Notwithstanding this crucial test in my political experience, and the seeming reason that caused it, I was subsequently honored with several important official positions which I accepted, but did not seek. In the various public positions in which I have been placed it has ever been my aim to discharge my duties with fidelity and without regard to selfish interests. If I have done anything that benefits my fellow-men, I shall feel that I have not lived in vain. In the field of literature four volumes of books on different subjects have been published over my signature, whether wisely or unwisely is not for me to say.

Some people have reason to be proud of their ancestry, while others have not, perhaps, for the best of reasons. In regard to myself, I have only to say that my earliest American ancestor was EDMUND RICE, who emigrated from Barkhamstead, Hertfordshire, England, to America in 1638, and settled at Sudbury, Mass. His family accompanied him, consisting of a wife and seven children.

Barkhamstead is one of the oldest towns in England. It is located about twenty miles from London,

and was founded by the Romans and occupied for centuries by a mixed population of Romans, Britons, and Saxons. Hence a transfusion of blood may be inferred, and perhaps a drop or two of Roman blood coursed in the veins of my worthy ancestor. If so, his descendants may inherit a tincture of it—myself among the rest—who knows?

Be this as it may, I am what I am, and claim to be nothing more. I have lived to an advanced age, have been twice married, and am now left where I began—alone in the world save descendants.

Williams College, in 1871, conferred on me the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws—a compliment which I appreciate, though not vain of titles. I have no use for them. I look at the bright side of things, and am content with my lot. I have acquired enough of this world's goods to supply my physical wants, and leave to my surviving children a pittance sufficient to equip them for the battle of life.

I have endeavored to live uprightly, guided by reason and "temperance in all things." The church to which I belong is the church of all mankind. My creed is short: "Lead a pure life, and do as you would be done by." If this is not sufficient, then I am willing to be called an agnostic. In truth, life is a mystery, and longevity but a brevity. The gate stands ajar through which all must pass into the unexplored hereafter. Yet we have the assurance that the passage is neither dark nor perilous when cheered by the "star" which the wise men of old saw in the East. This assurance is an inspiration, and may be accepted as the utterance of a divine philosophy. Whoever

attempts to fathom the "unknowable," has yet to learn that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite.

Nevertheless, we are all born of the infinite, and must ever remain a part of it. Yet we all have a life that is not only immortal, but forever progressive."

The subject of prime interest at this moment in this charming personal narrative, is the characteristic modesty with which MR. RICE alludes to the great work of his life, which won for him the pre-eminent recognition of "*Father of the Common School System of Ohio.*"

Happily the journals of the Ohio Senate furnish the full and complete record of the inception, draft, report, and advocacy of the School Bill by SENATOR RICE, and the vote, almost unanimous, by which it passed that body and ultimately the House, and thus became alike a law and a blessing to a generation of the children of the State. The full text of SENATOR RICE's speech was published in the *Columbus Statesman*. The *Cleveland Leader* said editorially:

"The School Bill, one of the most important bills before the Legislature, has passed the Senate substantially as it was reported by the Committee, of which

MR. RICE, Senator from Cuyahoga County, is Chairman, by a vote of 22 to 2. The bill is the result of much observation, care and labor, and will probably pass the House without material amendment. We take pleasure in transferring to our columns the able speech of SENATOR RICE, on the final passage of the bill. It gives a clear and succinct statement of the principal provisions of the bill, and will be read with interest by all who have the welfare of the peoples' college at heart."

It was in fact one of the most learned and instructive addresses ever delivered in a deliberative assembly. Its clearness of statement and wealth of illustration is suggestive of Macaulay's exposition of his new civil code for the Government of India. It reads to-day like a prophecy fulfilled. The following are its concluding paragraphs:

"By the provisions of this bill, it is intended to make our common schools what they ought to be—the colleges of the people—"cheap enough for the poorest, and good enough for the richest." With but a slight increase of taxation, schools of different grades can be established and maintained in every township of the State, and the sons and daughters of our farmers and mechanics have an opportunity of acquiring a finished education equally with the more favored of the land. And in this way, the elements of mind, now slumbering among the uneducated masses, like

the fine unwrought marble in the quarry, will be aroused, and brought out to challenge the admiration of the world.

Philosophers and sages will abound everywhere, on the farm and in the workshop. And many a man of genius will stand among the masses, and exhibit a brilliancy of intellect, which will be recognized in the circling years of the great future, as

“A light, a landmark on the cliffs of time.”

It is only the educated man, who is competent to interrogate nature, and comprehend her revelations. Though I would not break down the aristocracy of knowledge, of the present age, yet, sir, I would level up, and equalize, and thus create, if I may be allowed the expression, a democracy of knowledge. In this way, and in this way only, can man be made equal in fact—equal in their social and political relations—equal in mental refinement, and in a just appreciation of what constitutes man the brother of his fellow man.

In conclusion, sir, allow me to express my belief, that the day is not far distant when Ohio, in the noble cause of popular education and of human rights, will “lead the column,” and become what she is capable of becoming—a star of the first magnitude—the brightest in the galaxy of our American Union.”

It is gratifying at this time to look back forty years to the first Legislature under the new Constitution, and observe the candor, earnestness, and unanimity of sentiment, with which not only legislators, but the public press of the

State, without distinction of party, greeted the new school law, and awarded the meed of approval and praise to SENATOR RICE for his great and beneficent work.

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer*: "We have been waiting a corrected copy of MR. RICE's speech, which we are happy now to lay before our readers. Could the suggestions of the honorable senator have been made and heeded years ago, what a change they would have wrought in our moral, social and political condition. The speech will commend itself to the attentive perusal and hearty endorsement of every party and class of people. We were pleased yesterday to meet our able senator. He has been an honor to his constituents, and we consider him one of the most talented and effective members of the Senate. He has labored hard and disinterestedly for the good of the people, and is entitled to their warmest thanks."

The Cleveland *Herald* said: "We were pleased to welcome home to-day our esteemed fellow citizen, the HON. HARVEY RICE, senator from this county. MR. RICE has been a faithful public servant in all matters where party politics were not taken into account. For the School Law the State is indebted to his exertions. We believe MR. RICE has been one of the most valuable men in the legislature."

The Sandusky *Register* said: "Honor to whom honor is due. MR. RICE certainly deserves well of the people of Ohio for his manly and successful efforts in advancing the educational interests of the State.

Though a political opponent, we take pleasure in awarding him the credit due to his able and unwearying advocacy of the School Bill, recently passed. As a measure of public and private good, we regard it as the most important of any which has received the sanction of the Legislature for many years. It will be worth millions to the State, and to the people it is beyond price."

The *Chillicothe Advertiser* paid the following tribute to SENATOR RICE: "His untiring and extended labors in framing a law that would render our Common School System one of vast importance to the youth of the State, combined with his gentlemanly deportment, his high acquirements and legislative skill, seem to demand that he should be returned to the Senate to guard against ruthless mutilation of the law which cost him so much labor, and which, if executed in the spirit it was framed, will so much redound to the intelligence and honor of the State. To use the language of a prominent man in the State, 'HARVEY RICE is a man to whom any man could point with pride and say: He belongs to our party.'"

The *Ohio State Democrat* said: "As the author of the School Law, HARVEY RICE has a name and a fame which will render his re-election a matter of congratulation to the friends of education in every part of the State. He is a gentleman and a scholar, and we cannot doubt of his success. MR. RICE was one of the hard working members of the last Senate, and no man in that body enjoyed more of respect and esteem than fell to his lot. Firm in his opinions, and cautious in their expression, he was one of the very

few positive men that we ever knew who had no enemies."

Such is the contemporary history of the Ohio School Law and the public estimation of the high character, wisdom and foresight of its distinguished author.

The last report of the Cleveland Board of Education paid an extended and appreciative tribute to the memory of MR. RICE, two extracts from which are as follows :

"It would seem an unpardonable neglect of a solemn obligation if the Board of Education failed to note the sad event and give expression to the common sorrow incident to the final departure of the eminent and beloved citizen, whose early devotion to the subject of primary education won for him the pre-eminent recognition of *Father of the Common School System of Ohio*."

"* * * * * The personality of HARVEY RICE commanded alike respect and reverence. Noble in stature, with a countenance reminding one of the well known likeness of the poet Whittier, his pleasant social qualities and genial spirit, awakened a sentiment of regard akin to affection. He was a younger contemporary of the poet Bryant, whose birthplace was in an adjoining town, and by whose "Thanatopsis" and other poems, his youth was inspired."

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